

## Op-Ed: Gambling problem? Help is available and recovery is possible

By Pat Browne and Josh Ercole

As we recognize the 20th annual [Problem Gambling Awareness Month](#) this March, the Pennsylvania Lottery and its responsible gambling partners are working to spread the word that help is available for those struggling with compulsive gambling issues.

How can you tell if you have a gambling problem? Problem gambling is any gambling, betting, or wagering that causes issues for someone, their family members, or friends — whether those are financial, legal, emotional, or have some other impact. Gambling problems can be mild or severe and can worsen over time.

A gambling disorder is often referred to as a “hidden addiction,” as it can be more challenging to detect than other addictions. It is a chronic and progressive disease, much like alcoholism or drug addiction. It’s best to confront the problem early while there’s still time to get help before it becomes problematic.

While most people are able to play the Pennsylvania Lottery in a responsible and enjoyable way, we recognize gambling can be problematic for some players – that’s why the Pennsylvania Lottery and the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania (CCGP) are working together to publicize resources that are available for Pennsylvanians. Anyone needing help for themselves or a loved one can call the Pennsylvania Problem Gambling Helpline at 1-800-GAMBLER (1-800-426-2537). Chat and text options are also available at [www.pacouncil.com/helpline](http://www.pacouncil.com/helpline).

The Lottery helps to fund the helpline, which is available 24/7, 365 days per year. All calls are free and confidential. When players call the Pennsylvania Problem Gambling Helpline, they are referred to trained professionals who can provide assistance to anyone affected by a gambling problem.

Additional help and information are available at [www.pacouncil.com](http://www.pacouncil.com), the CCGP website. This is where you can read about some of the [Warning Signs](#) that may signal you or a loved one may suffer from problem gambling disorder. Additionally, you can read over the [10 Rules of Responsible Gambling](#) to find helpful tips that will help you ensure you are gambling responsibly. The CCGP website also has information available on self-help meetings, including those that are being conducted virtually.

Remember that when choosing to gamble, it should be kept fun and as a source of entertainment. If sticking to limits becomes a challenge, that may be a sign of a problem. If you or a loved one is struggling with problem gambling issues, don’t be afraid to ask for help. Remember that recovery is possible, and help is just a call away.

*Pat Browne is the Acting Secretary of Revenue for the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue, which operates the Pennsylvania Lottery. Josh Ercole is the Executive Director of the Council on Compulsive Gambling of Pennsylvania, a non-profit that provides information and resources on problem gambling.*